

## Some topics for prayer

That we may wait constructively for Christmas - and for Jesus' return.

People who are worried about the covid-19 virus and its new variants.

The fair and just distribution of the covid-19 vaccine across the world.

People who are victim in any way to the pandemic.

People across the world who have to make decisions about how to manage the pandemic.

The street you live in and individuals in it.

Members of your family. Friends. Not-so-friends.

Our town, our nation and our world.

Our NHS. Our schools and care homes.

People who work in our public services.

Caring for our planet and sharing its resources fairly and sustainably.

People living anywhere in the world where there is famine, war, poverty, pandemic, depression, hopelessness ...

## Some prayers ('collects') set for today

Eternal God,  
as Mary waited for the birth of your Son,  
so we wait for his coming in glory;  
bring us through the birth pangs of this present age  
to see, with her, our great salvation  
in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

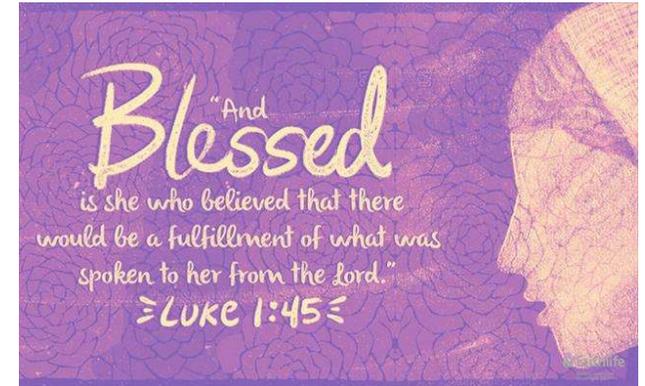
God our redeemer,  
who prepared the Blessed Virgin Mary  
to be the mother of your Son:  
grant that, as she looked for his coming as our saviour,  
so we may be ready to greet him  
when he comes again as our judge;  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever. Amen.

*Please take this leaflet home with you.  
May God bless you and everyone you love and pray for.*

## Welcome to private prayer

for

**19<sup>th</sup> December  
2021  
4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of  
Advent**



This sheet offers you one of the readings set for today, together with a structured way of reading it prayerfully. It also offers you prayers set for today, some other prayers, and ideas for topics for prayer.

But first and foremost, let us 'Be still and know that I am God' (Psalm 46:10)

### The Lord's prayer

Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name, your kingdom come,  
your will be done, on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours  
now and for ever. Amen.

### The Grace

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
and the love of God,  
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,  
be with us all evermore. Amen.

***You can hear or watch our weekly  
services - around 20 minutes - on our  
website***

## A reading set for today

*Here is a suggestion for a structured way of reading prayerfully. It is based on an ancient practice called Lectio Divina.*

First, breathe slowly and deeply.

Ask God to speak to you through the passage that you are about to read.

1<sup>st</sup> reading of the passage: listen.

Read through the passage once, silently, but 'saying each word out loud in your mind', and listening.

Allow a word or phrase to attract your attention. Let it arise naturally from the passage as if it were God's word for you today, however unexpected.

Say it to yourself a few times, or underline it with a pen.

2<sup>nd</sup> reading of the passage: ponder.

Read the passage a second time. As you read and listen, ask how and why this word or phrase is speaking to you.

Summarise what it means for you.

3<sup>rd</sup> reading of the passage: pray.

Read the passage a third time, prayerfully asking Christ what he is saying to you in this word or phrase, and listen.

What is it that you need to do - or consider - or relinquish - or take on - as a result of what God is saying to you?

Talk to God about it in prayer.

*Here is space to jot things down, to take away and to return to later:*

## After Gabriel leaves Mary, she visits her relative Elizabeth

In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth.

When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb.

And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb.

"And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy.

"And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her by the Lord."

Luke 1:39-45 (NRSV translation)

### ***I wonder ...***

... what is your favourite part of this story?

... what is the most important part of this story?

... which part of this story is for you?

... what Mary thought and felt?

... what Elizabeth thought and felt?

... in what ways is waiting a constructive thing to do, like waiting for a baby to be born?

... in what ways Advent is like this?

***... and why?***